

The diversity of races and ethnicities in our neighborhood is one of the strengths at St. Regis. We are blessed to sit in a part of town where neighbors are black, white, hispanic, and Asian. People who live in other parts of the metro area don't have that advantage. I grew up in an all-white neighborhood in Kansas City and did not have a black classmate until eighth grade. Children in our school here as well as in the public schools nearby have the opportunity to grow up with multiculturalism as part of their lives.

Overcoming racism is a lifelong challenge. Here at our weekend worship, we make efforts to introduce music and artwork from different cultures, and to welcome into ministry people who reflect the diversity of our area. We've made some progress over the years, but we still have further to go before the people in our pews resemble the people on our streets.

This Pentecost Sunday we hear about the gifts of the Spirit in a passage from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. Just as the Spirit fell upon the apostles in the days after Jesus' ascension, so the Spirit falls upon all believers today in baptism and confirmation. Paul says there are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit. That is, the Spirit is manifest in different ways throughout the community. "To each individual," he says, "the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit." So each of us has some manifestation of God's Spirit, evident in the things we do well or delight the community.

But Paul goes on. All these individual manifestations of the Spirit work together for a common good. The Spirit is present not just in the individual gifts, but in the body of believers as a corporate gift. "As a body is one though it has many parts," Paul says, "and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ."

All this challenges us to have two balancing attitudes about the gifts of the Spirit. One is that the Spirit has endowed each of us with something. It is part of our spiritual work to divine what that gift is and put it to work for the community. The other challenge, though, is to enjoy the gifts of others, and in some cases to put up with the gifts that other people have. We are not always pleased that the Spirit has endowed a brother or sister with opinions that differ from ours, with skills that are better than ours, or with ideas that restrict ours. There are times we wish the Spirit would ease off on giving away these gifts.

But if the gifts are truly of the Spirit, they will bring benefit for the entire community, because those gifts, with ours, form the body of Christ. The gifts of the Spirit are diverse, but they need not be divisive.